

September 28, 2017

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Exhibit 8

To: The Members of the Environmental Quality Council:

I write today as a Montana citizen, a landowner and a sheep producer.

I write to express my concerns about Montana FWP's grizzly bear management or lack thereof.

I have personally experienced livestock losses due to grizzly bear depredations and the high economic loss to my family as a result of the same.

I have had neighbors who have also experienced such losses. Worse yet, some of my neighbors, particularly those in the colonies, have to live with the presence every day of grizzly bears in their fields and in their yards.

I have personally experienced the growth of Montana's grizzly bear population, particularly along the Rocky Mountain Front area of Montana. I have witnessed bears ranging from the Rocky Mountain Front all the way to Havre. The species is clearly recovered and expanding.

Like other sheep producers, I support grizzly bear recovery efforts. At the same time, I also support proper management of the bear. In my opinion, these two events are connected. There can't be recovery without proper management.

This is why I am troubled to write this letter to say that Montana's agriculture producers along the front are not being well served by MT FWP's grizzly bear specialist in the area.

The specialist has been an FWP employee for 30 plus years. He has also been tasked with grizzly bear recovery on the Front. During this time, this specialist has managed to alienate most of the private land owners along and within the RMF area. He has repeatedly discounted the concerns expressed by those directly impacted by grizzly bear encounters. He has also been non responsive to grizzly bear conflicts. This is resulting in a loss of confidence in the delisting process, namely in FWP's ability to manage the species if management is turned over to the State.

The reality is that FWP, by and through its RMF bear specialist, has not made the adjustments necessary to evolve from recovery management thinking to population management thinking – the latter being where the Department should be. This is best shown by decisions relating to 'conflict bears'. The specialists bear relocation decisions have resulted in a number of 'problem' bears returning to the very areas where they depredated, resulting in further damage to private property. Most recently, the specialist refused to take any management action on a sow, with three cubs, which was killing livestock in the proximity of residences and young children despite landowner requests that he do so.

The fact that FWP's grizzly bear specialist for the RMF area has little to no credibility with livestock producers in the area has been brought to the attention of MT FWP managers in Helena many times. Yet, nothing has been done to redress this situation. As a result, landowner tolerance for the

presence of the bear on private property is decreasing daily. This situation is neither good for the bear, the landowner, or plans to delist the species.

I bring this matter to the attention of the Legislature because we have had no positive response or action from the Department. I am asking this honored committee to carry out its oversight function on the Department by not only asking the Department about the quality of the working relationship between FWP bear personnel on the front and landowners as to bear management in the area, but also to query the Department about its commitment to working with its partners in the grizzly bear delisting and management process, namely USDA Wildlife Services.

As stated above, successfully grizzly bear management now and post-delisting depends on good landowner relations, the Department, by and through its RMF bear specialist, is falling down in this regard both at the local and department level.

Sincerely,

s/s

Dave McEwen

Galata, Montana